

Major railway upgrade in Southampton set to be completed in week-long line closure

February 10, 2021



Between Saturday 13 and Friday 19 February the line from Southampton Central to Brockenhurst and Romsey will close as engineers finish a £17 million upgrade for freight services.

Since the end of January, engineers have worked around the clock between Southampton Central and Redbridge, remodelling lines used by freight trains to access the Port of Southampton.

Almost a mile of new track, 22 new signals and 14 new sets of switches and crossings – which allow trains to move between tracks – have been installed to transform both the railway and the way freight services are handled.

To complete the project and give the green light to longer trains, engineers will need to commission the railway's new signals in a line closure between Saturday 13 and Friday 19 February.

The improved railway means freight trains will no longer need to move in and out of Freightliner's Maritime Terminal to load and unload goods. Combined with new track, allowing trains to move at higher speeds, plus longer sidings, the efficiency of freight operations will be boosted by as much as 30%.

It also brings environmental benefits, as longer freight trains mean will cut down on the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) on the roads. Each train will be able to carry up to 14 extra containers – the equivalent of 14 HGVs – to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester, cutting down on greenhouse gas emissions.

Passenger services between Southampton Central and Brockenhurst and Romsey will be replaced by bus services. Rail shuttle services will also operate to keep passengers moving.

CrossCountry, Great Western Railway (GWR), Southern and South Western Railway (SWR) passengers are advised to check before travelling, using Network Rail's dedicated website (traveladvice.southamptonlineclosures.co.uk), with their train operator or National Rail Enquiries.

Mark Killick, Network Rail's Wessex route director, said: "The line closure between February 13 and 19 will bring the core work of this project to an end, and with it, huge benefits to our freight operators and the local environment. It's vital that we continue to modernise the rail network and we're grateful to our passengers and those living close to the railway in Southampton for their patience while we finish this work."

Charlene Wallace, Network Rail's director of freight, national passenger and customer experience, said: "We're delighted to see this programme moving forward, building on the work already undertaken in Southampton that is helping our customers run longer and heavier trains. We're committed to getting more freight onto rail and schemes like this give the sector the boost it needs to deliver."

Photo credit: Network Rail